



Vol. LXII — Nos. 5-6 March 8, 24, 1982 C.E. Jamadi al-Awwal 12, 28, 1402 A.H.

The Impress of Divine Power

by HAZRAT MIRZA GHULAM AHMAD
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When a person arrives at the stage of meeting with God, he sometimes performs acts which appear to be beyond human power and have the colour of Divine Power. For instance, during the battle of Badr, the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, threw a handful of gravel at the opposing force not accompanied by any prayer, but with his own spiritual power, which affected the opposing force in such an extraordinary manner that everyone's eyes were struck by the gravel and they were rendered sightless and began to run around in confusion and helplessness. This miracle is referred to in the verse: It was not thou who didst throw, but it was Allah Who threw (8 :

18) ; meaning that it was Divine Power that was working behind the scene and it did that which was not within human power.

In the same way, another miracle of the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, which was the splitting of the moon, was displayed by Divine Power. It was not accompanied by any prayer as it happened merely by his pointing at the moon with his finger which was filled with Divine power. There are many other miracles which the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, worked purely with his power and which were not accompanied by any prayer. On many occasions he multiplied water so much by dipping his fingers into

a cup of water that the whole host and their camels and horses drank of it and yet the original quantity of the water was not diminished. On many occasions, by putting his hand upon three or four loaves of bread, he satisfied the hunger of thousands. On some occasions, he blessed a small quantity of milk with his lips and company of people drank from it and were filled. On some occasions by spitting into a well of brackish water, he rendered it sweet. On some occasions he healed severely wounded people of their injuries by placing his hands upon them. On some occasions he replaced the eye-balls of people which had fallen out in consequence of some injury received in battle and healed them with the blessings of his hand. In this way, he did many other things by his personal power behind which worked Divine Power.

If the Brahmos and the philosophers and the followers of nature of today refuse to accept these miracles, they are to be excused for they cannot recognize the station at which a human being is endowed with Divine power by way of reflection. If they laugh at these things they are also to be excused for they have not progressed beyond their childish condition and have not reached any degree of spiritual maturity. Their condition is far from perfect and they are happy that they should die in that condition.

But one pities the Christians, who having heard of some similar, but of a lower degree of events, in the life of Jesus, put them forward as an argument in support of the divinity of Jesus and allege that the reviving of the dead by Jesus and the healing of paralytics and lepers by him was by his own power and not by any prayer, and that this is proof that he was truly the son of God and even God himself. It is a pity that they are unaware that if a human being can become God by performing such exploits then our lord and master, the Holy Prophet, peace be on him, was much more entitled to such divinity for he displayed many more extraordinary exploits of power than were displayed by Jesus. Not only did the Holy Prophet work these exploits himself, but left a legacy of a long series of them among his followers till the Day of Judgment, which has been in evidence always in all ages and will continue to be in evidence till the end of the world. The impress of Divine power which has been experienced by holy souls among the Muslims is difficult to match from among other people. Then what folly is it to believe in someone as God or as the son of God, on account of these extraordinary events. If a man can become God by performing such exploits, there would be no end to the number of Gods (*Ayenae Kamalat-e-Islam*, pp. 65-67)

THE LIGHT

Managing Editor : Dr. Allah Bakhsh
Asstt. Editor : Nasir Ahmad

Wednesday — March 24, 1982

BIRTH OF JESUS — II

The new or spiritual creation of man is not merely an empty word. Consciousness of God is innate in the nature of man and to love Him is ingrained in man's very nature. The Lord Who created man has, on the other hand, an unbounded love for him. When the Divine and human loves meet together there comes into being another creation, the spiritual soul of man. The resultant of their union is communication with each other. Man's will and desires are entirely lost and merged into the Supreme Will. At this stage God reveals Himself to man through His revelations. Man receives His Word and His Spirit descends upon him. How beautifully has the poet sung :

جب اس جسد خاکی میں ہوتا ہے یقین پیدا
تو کر لیتا ہے بال و پر روح الامیں پیدا

“When in this body of dust is infused
Faith's light,

The Spirit of Truth takes to its wings
of flight”.

Visions are seen and Divine voices are heard. The man of dust has truly connections with the Divine in heaven.

It is to be remembered that the body of dust undergoes no change. It does not become God, neither God becomes the blood and flesh of the mortal being. It is the soul that undergoes the transmutation. As the perfect man in this state is in complete connection with the Divine, he is able to perform miracles, especially the miracle of effecting a change for the good in the lives of other human beings. He quickens the dead souls and cures the spiritually diseased. The man of complete faith, the Prophet or the Saint, is at one with His Creator. However, his body remains subject to physical laws, needing food, requiring rest and all other physical and physiological functions. He is as much subject to death as any other mortal. But it is his soul which soars high in regions celestial and heavenly. It is not possible to dilate upon this fine subject here. Books of mystics are full of such descriptions. It has rightly been named, “The Religious Experience” by eminent scholars and philosophers such as Allama Iqbal. It is an experience well-recognised by all those well-

versed in religious lore.

The grave error which has crept in the minds especially of the followers of Jesus, is that they take the words and expressions uttered by Prophets and Saints in a literal sense, while what the latter meant to convey is true only in a metaphorical sense. For instance when it is said that a perfect man is His son or is one with Him ; they are not to be taken in their literal meanings but are true only in their spiritual sense i.e., God has endeared Himself to such a mortal being, hears his prayers and supplications and is in communion with and support of him, even against the whole world and all its combined forces. I may add for the consideration of my Christian friends that the Holy Gospels and sayings of Prophet Jesus, peace be upon him, fully support such a significance. I give below only two quotations from "The Gospel of John" :

"However, as many as did receive him, to them he gave authority, to become God's children...and they were born, not from blood or from a fleshly will or from man's will, but from God". (John, 1 : 12-13)

In these verses all persons receiving God's messenger are likened spiritually to God's children, born not of flesh and blood but from God.

"The works that I am doing in the name of my Father, these bear witness

about me. But you do not believe ... My sheep listen to my voice ... and they follow me and I give them everlasting life ... I and the Father are one. Once more the Jews lifted up stones to stone him. Jesus replied to them, 'I displayed to you many fine works from the Father. For which of these works are you stoning me ? The Jews answered him, 'We are stoning you not for a fine work but for blasphemy, even because you, *although being a man make yourself a god*'. Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your law, "I said : you are gods". If he called gods those against whom the Word of God came, and yet the Scriptures cannot be nullified, do you say to me whom the Father sanctified and dispatched into the world, 'you blaspheme' because I said *I am God's son*? If I am not doing the *works of my Father*, do not believe me. But if I am doing them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, in order that you may come to know". (John 10 : 25-38)

The italicised words are clearly metaphorical expressions. 'God's children', 'born not from blood and flesh but from God', 'my sheep' 'everlasting life', 'being a man like yourself a God', 'If he called gods those to whom the Word of God came' are all symbolical expressions, and not used in their physical connotation, denoting a spiritual trans-

formation and not physical change. It is left to the just reader to decide whether the expressions used in the above quotations have all been used in their symbolical or parabolical significances or in their literal and physical meanings.

A book entitled "The Myth of God Incarnate" written by seven leading British Bishops, has been published from Great Britain. We reproduce below a few paragraphs from its Preface and the chapter "Jesus and the World Religions" by its worthy editor Mr. John Hick :

"It is clear to the writers of this book—as to a great many other Christians today—that Christianity has throughout its history been a continuously growing and changing movement. As a result its theology has developed an immense range of variation as the church has passed through successive historical periods and responded to widely cultural circumstances. Indeed, as T. S. Eliot said, 'Christianity is always adapting itself into something which can be believed.'

"In the nineteenth century, Western Christianity made two major new adjustments in response to important enlargements of human knowledge. ... 'The writers of this book are convinced that another major theological development is called for in this last part of the twentieth century. The need arises from grow-

ing knowledge of Christian origins, and involves a recognition that Jesus was (as he is presented in Acts (2.21) '*a man approved by God for a special role within the divine purpose, and that the later conception of him as God incarnate, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity living a human life, is a mythological or poetic way of expressing his significance for us.* This recognition is called for in the interests of truth ; but it also has increasingly important practical implications for our relationship to the peoples of the other great world religions". (Preface, p. IX)

"...Christianity was from the first very diverse, and has never ceased developing in its diversity. ... 'Orthodoxy' is a mirage, which can and often does inhibit the creative thinking which Christianity sorely needs today. We therefore ask that the ideas and arguments in this book be judged on their merits rather than by their conformity to some previous stage of Christian development. ... Let it then be said that our hope is to release talk about God and about Jesus from confusions, thereby freeing people to serve God in the Christian path with greater integrity.

"The adjustments that are now called for—and that have indeed been in process for several decades—are not likely to become generally accepted without further ecclesiastical trauma. But we believe that

they will help to make Christian discipleship possible for our children's children. For Christianity can only remain honestly believable by being continuously open to the truth" (Preface, p. X).

"The exaltation of the founder has of course taken characteristically different forms in the two religions. But in each case it led the developing tradition to speak of him in terms which he himself did not use, and to understand him by means of a complex of beliefs which was only gradually formed by later generations of his followers" (p. 170).

"Accordingly the first Christian preachers did not draw the conclusion that he was *himself God but that he was a man chosen by God for a special role and declared by his resurrection to be Messiah and Lord*" (Acts 2.22 and 36) (p. 171).

"I see the Nazarene, then, as intensely and overwhelmingly conscious of the reality of God. *He was a man of God, living in the unseen presence of God, and addressing God as abba, father. His spirit was open to God and his life a continuous response to the divine love as both utterly gracious and utterly demanding... Thus in Jesus' presence, we should have felt we are in the presence of God—not in the sense that the man Jesus literally is God, but in the sense that he was so totally conscious of God that we could catch something of that consciousness by spiritual contagion.*" (p. 172)

"He must have been aware that whereas ordinary men and women had most of the time, only a faint and second-hand sense of the divine presence, and while the scribes and pharisees were often using religion to support their own privileged position, he was himself directly and overwhelmingly conscious of the heavenly Father, so that he could speak about him with authority, could summon men and women to live as his children, could declare his judgment and his forgiveness, and could heal the sick by his power".... "Jesus must thus have been conscious of a unique position among his contemporaries, which he may have expressed by accepting the title of Messiah or, alternatively by applying to himself the image of the heavenly Son of Man — two categories each connoting a human being called to be God's special servant and agent on earth"... "Jesus was proclaimed as 'a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs'...(Acts. 2.22)... "Those who became his disciples were 'born again' (p. 173).

"Michael Goulder and Francis Young show in chapters 4 and 5 how widespread in the ancient world were ideas of divinity embodied in human life, so that there is nothing in the least surprising in the deification of Jesus in that cultural environment. Within Judaism (Continued on p. 40)

JESUS OF THE QUR'AN

HAZRAT MAULANA MUHAMMAD ALI

Brief in all the Prophets

One of the fundamental principles of Islam is a belief in all the prophets of the world, a belief in the fact that before the advent of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, different prophets had been raised among different nations. Thus the great change that the advent of the mighty Prophet to Arabia brought about was that the days of the national prophet was over to give place to the Great World Prophet, to the new order which was to bring about the unity of the whole human race. A belief in all the prophets of the world being thus the basic principle of the faith of Islam, the Muslims have always been averse to institute comparisons between the various prophets of the world, because comparisons, as they say, are odious. In fact, they were forbidden by the Prophet himself to do so unnecessarily lest in the heat of controversy on such points, things might be said which may be derogatory to the dignity of a prophet. At the same time the Holy Qur'an declares in plain words that there are varying degrees of excellence even among the prophets: "We have made some of these apostles to excel others" (ii. 253). It must, however,

be borne in mind that it is one thing to say that one prophet possesses an excellence which another does not, and quite another to speak of that other in derogatory words. The prophets were all perfect men raised for the regeneration of man, but they no doubt possessed varying degrees of excellence according to the nature of the work with which they were entrusted and the capabilities of the race for whose regeneration they were raised. It is in this light, therefore, that we take up the challenge so often given by the Christians as to the comparative greatness of Muhammad or Christ, a task which, though painful is necessary because of the wrong inferences drawn from the sacred Book of Islam.

Work and not words

The error which Christian writers generally commit is that they place all reliance on words, not caring for the work actually done; they look to appearances, not to reality. With them greatness consists in the terms of eulogy which may be heaped upon a person and the incredibly wonderful stories which may be narrated of him, not in the actual work done by him. Hence they are always contending that Jesus

speaks of himself thus, not so Muhammad, peace be on him, or that the founder of Christianity performed so many miracles which the founder of Islam did not. The Holy Qur'an, on the other hand, adopts a different attitude towards this question, regarding work, not words or miracles, as the criterion of greatness. It speaks of the Holy Prophet not in the words of eulogy in which Jesus Christ speaks of himself according to the Gospels, but by drawing attention to the great change, the mighty transformation, that he brought about in the world. It does not speak, except in rare instances, even of his great miracles which are, however, recorded in collections of reports ; in fact, it looks upon all miracles as matters of secondary importance in comparison with the greatest of all miracles, the miracle of planting virtue and supplanting evil in the world, the miracle of taking up men from the depth of degradation and raising them to the highest dignity which they are capable of rising to. And why are miracles wrought, after all ? They do not serve any purpose in themselves ; they are not the end but the means to the great end of the spiritual regeneration of the world. It is for this reason that the Holy Quran does speak of the Holy Prophet in high-sounding words, nor does it lay much stress on his miracles, but speaks again and

again of the wonderful transformation which he wrought, a transformation so unique in the history of the world that the writer of the article on the *Koran* in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (eleventh edition) speaks of him as the "most successful of all prophets and religious personalities," an admission which far outweighs all the high-sounding words and wonderful stories of the miracles narrated in the Gospels.

Jesus in the Quran

The Christian controversialist of today, however, seems to think that he has another way out of the difficulty. He bases the superiority of Christ to other prophets, not on the Gospels, but on the Holy Qur'an. A strange allegation indeed ! The Qur'an which, on the one hand, is denounced to be the fabrication of an impostor is brought forward, on the other, as the testimony, supporting the extravagant claims advanced for Jesus Christ. The position of the Christian controversialist is quite inexplicable, but we need not be surprised at it as matters far more important relating to the Christian religion are as inexplicable. It is said that the Holy Qur'an speaks of Jesus Christ in words of high praise. Quite so ; but at the same time it mentions him as only one among the numerous Israelite prophets who followed Moses ; it describes him to be an

apostle bearing a message limited to a single nation : 'And an apostle to the children of Israel' (iii. 48). This description is sufficient to show that the Holy Qur'an cannot consistently place him in a position of superiority to the other prophets, to say nothing of the great World Prophet whose message is expressly stated to be for the whole human race. But what a Christian is unable to see is, why should the Qur'an speak of a prophet of another nation in words of praise ? In fact, he is unable to differentiate between the Gospels and the Holy Qur'an in this respect. The message of Jesus was for the Israelites and therefore he had nothing to do with other prophets ; the message of Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of God be upon him, was for the whole world and therefore the Holy Qur'an speaks of the prophets of the whole world. And as in addition it required a belief in all the prophets, therefore it was necessary for it to preach respect for all of them. Now at the time of its advent Jesus Christ and his mother were two of the sacred personages whose names were held in the greatest abhorrence by the Israelites, so which nation they belonged. Mary was falsely accused of adultery, and her son was denounced as the offspring of illicit intercourse and as a liar. The Holy Qur'an had to sweep away these calumnies to establish the great

principle of the righteousness of all prophets. Those who lay much stress on the words of praise for Jesus Christ and his mother in the Holy Qur'an must remember that the false allegations of the Jews against these two righteous persons required a mention of their virtues and their greatness, and the very fact that other prophets were not denounced in such evil terms made a mention of their virtues unnecessary.

If, however, it is inconsistent in a Christian to base the alleged superiority of Jesus Christ to the Holy Prophet on a book which he condemns as the work of an impostor, it is stranger still that wild statements are often made in making out a case for Jesus which are not only opposed to the Holy Qur'an but which even the Gospels, the sacred scriptures of the Christian religion, condemn to be false and conclusions are drawn from the words of the Holy Qur'an which are not only quite foreign to its intent but which are also belied by the Gospels. In dealing with this question therefore I shall have to refer both to the Holy Qur'an and the Bible, especially the Gospels. But as regards the reliability which can be placed upon the material drawn from these two sources there is a world of difference and the circumstances under which the Gospels were written and transmitted make it necessary to accept their statements very guardedly.

Authenticity of the Quran

As regards the authenticity of the Holy Qur'an, I need not detain the reader very long. From one end of the world to the other, from China in the Far East to Morocco and Algeria in the Far West, from the scattered island of the Pacific Ocean to the great desert of Africa, the Qur'an is one, and no copy differing in even a diacritical point is met with in the possession of one among the four hundred millions of Muslims. There are, and always have been, contending sects, but the same Qur'an is in the possession of one and all. Political dissensions and doctrinal differences grew up within a quarter of a century after the death of the Holy Prophet, but no one ever raised a voice against the purity of the text of the Holy Qur'an. A manuscript with the slightest variation in the text is unknown. Even Dr. Mingana has been unable to show any but mistakes due to carelessness in copying or transcription by inexperienced hands in his 'Leaves from three Ancient Qur'ans'. And the original manuscript copies made and circulated under the orders of the third successor of the Holy Prophet have been safely preserved to this day. Here is the opinion of a hostile critic :

'The recension of Othman has been handed down to us unaltered ...contend-

ing and embittered factions taking their rise in the murder of Othman himself within a quarter of a century from the death of Mohamet, have never since rent the Mohametan world. Yet but One Coran has been current amongst them ; and the consentaneous use by all of the same scripture in every age to the present day is an irrefragable proof that we have now before us the very text prepared by command of the unfortunate Caliph. *There is probably in the world no other work which has remained twelve centuries with so pure a text* (Muir's *Life of Mohamet* ; italics are mine).

The same author goes on to show that the copy made by 'Uthman was a faithful reproduction of the copy made by Zaid only six months after the death of the Holy Prophet and that Zaid's edition was a faithful copy of the revelations of the Holy Prophet, giving a number of reasons for believing so, and the conclusion to which he comes is that he agree with the verdict of Von Hammer : 'That we hold *the Coran to be as surely Mohamet's word as the Mohametans hold it to be the word of God.*'

Transmission of the Gospels

The story of the authorship and transmission of the Gospels is, however, quite different. The earliest existing manuscript that was found in 1859 is a Greek manuscript which, we are told, was made

about the middle of the fourth century after Jesus Christ. Being found on Mount Sinai in the Convent of St. Catherine it is known as the Siniaticus. Another known as the Alexandrinus which is now in the British Museum belongs to the fifth century. Another called the Vatican belongs to the fourth century but is incomplete. And these are said to be the three chief manuscripts. As to their condition and reliability I will quote, not a critic, but a commentator of the Bible, the Rev. J. R. Dummelow :

‘To begin with, the writers of the Gospels report in Greek (although they may have had some Aramaic Sources) the sayings of Jesus Christ who for the most part probably spoke Aramaic. Nor is it likely that these writers or their copyists had any idea that their records would go beyond the early Churches with which they themselves were familiar.

‘The same applies to St. Paul. His letters, now so valued, were messages only intended for the Churches to which they were addressed. Those who first copied them would not regard them at all “Sacred” in our sense of the word.

‘Nor even in the later centuries do we find that scrupulous regard for the sacred text which marked the transmission of the Old Testament. Copyist would sometimes put in not what was in the text, but what he thought ought to be in it. He would trust a fickle memory, or he

would even make the text accord with the views of the school to which he belonged. Besides this, an enormous number of copies are preserved. In addition to the versions and quotations from the Christian Fathers, nearly four thousand Greek manuscripts of the New Testament are known to exist. As a result, the variety of readings is considerable.

What reliance can be placed on documents which were transmitted so carelessly and with such additions and alterations by the scribes? Even their authorship and the date of writing is absolutely uncertain. The first of the canonical Gospels is advertised as the Gospel according to St. Matthew, who was an Apostle. But it is certain that that Gospel was never written by him. It was written by some unknown hand. The story of its authorship as given by the commentator, whom I have quoted above, is that probably St. Matthew had written in Hebrew a book of ‘logia’ or ‘oracles, which is not to be met with anywhere, except that Papias writing in A.D. 130 credits St. Matthew with the composition of such a book. ‘Of a Greek translation of these “Logia” our author seems to have made such liberal use, that he acknowledged his obligations to the Apostle by calling his work “according to Matthew.” This explanation speaks for itself. St. Matthew may have written a certain book which is not

met with any where except in the reference in Papias. The rest is all a conjecture. There is not the least evidence that the unknown author of the first Gospel had a copy of this book or of its liberal use of it. The conjecture is based simply on the fact that he called it the Gospel according to St. Matthew, but he might have done it as well if he had only the oral traditions of St. Matthew.

The next Gospel is that of St. Mark, who was a companion of St. Peter, and the following testimony as recorded by Papias about A.D. 130 is relied upon in ascribing the authorship of the Gospel to him :

‘Mark having become (or having been) Peter’s interpreter wrote all that he remembered (or, all that Peter related) though he did not (record) in order that which was said or done by Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor followed Him ; but subsequently, as I said, (attached himself) to Peter who used to frame his teaching to meet the (immediate) wants (of his hearers); and not as making a connected narrative of the Lord’s discourses.’

Even if we accept this evidence, the Gospel of St. Mark may be said to have been based on the oral tradition of Peter, but even this evidence does not make it certain that the Gospel in our hands was actually written by St. Mark and higher

criticism favours the view that he was only the author of the nucleus of the present Gospel ascribed to him.

St. Luke too was not a disciple of Jesus but a disciple of the Apostles and he said to have followed St. Paul. And as regards the fourth Gospel, there is no doubt that it is a much later composition. As regards the dates of the various Gospels, the most favourable view as regards the first three Gospels is that they were written about the year A.D. 70, but higher criticism favours a much later date, and internal evidence is regarded to point to this conclusion. In a discussion as to the date of canonical Matthew we are told that many are disposed to bring down the date of the entire Gospel as late as to A.D. 30.’ An earlier date can only be admitted if a great many passages are treated as later interpolations. As regards the date of St. Luke the conclusion arrived at is that ‘the year A.D. 110 will be the superior, and somewhere about A.D. 110 the inferior, limit of the date of its’ composition’ (*Encyclopaedia Biblica*).

The considerations as to the authorship, the date and transmission of the Gospels, the very large variety of manuscripts and readings and the undeniable existence of interpolations in them reduce their credibility to the minimum ; and hence a criticism of them in the *Encyclopaedia Biblica* leads the Rev. E. A. Abbot

to raise a very important question : 'The foregoing sections may have sometimes seemed to raise a doubt whether any credible elements were to be found in the Gospels at all.' The answer to this question is that in all the Gospels, the following five passages may be treated as surely credible : (1) The passage that shows that Jesus refused to be called sinless : 'Why callest thou me good ? there is none good but one, that is, God' (Mark x. 18). (2) The passage that shows that he held that blasphemy against himself could be forgiven : 'All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men : but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men' (Mark xii. 31) (3) The passage that shows that his own mother and brethren had no faith in him and they sincerely thought that he was mad : And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him ; for they said, He is beside himself' (Mark iii. 21). From v. 31 it appears that these friends were his own mother and his brothers. (4) The passage that shows that Jesus Christ had no knowledge of the unseen : 'Of that day and of that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the son but the Father.' (5) The passage that speaks of the cry of despair that he uttered on the cross : 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me' (Matt. xxvii, 44). To these five are add-

ed four others dealing with his miracles which will be referred to in the discussion on his miracles later on, and these nine passages are said to be 'the foundation-pillar for a truly scientific life of Jesus.'

It would thus be seen that the basis of the Christian religion is laid on the most unreliable record, and the stories of the miracles wrought and the wonderful deeds done, on which is based the doctrine of the Divinity of Jesus Christ and of his superiority to all mortals, can therefore be only received with the greatest caution. It must, however, be borne in mind that mere superiority of Jesus Christ as a mortal to another mortal, says the Holy Founder of Islam, does not bring us a whit nearer the truth of the Christian religion unless it is shown that he possessed a Divine nature or that he did deeds which no mortal has ever done. If the Christian religion had followed the principles laid down by the earlier prophets, the assertion that Jesus Christ was a greater man than any other human being that ever lived, would have done some good to the cause of Christianity, but so long as the atonement of the sins of men by a Divine person remains the central doctrine of that religion, nothing less than a clear proof that his superiority to other mortals lay in being Divine and above a mortal can be of any use to its cause. It is in this light that a discussion of the relative merits of Christianity and Islam, or of the relative greatness of their founders, can really help a seeker after truth.

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Slavery, Christianity and Islam

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Brief history of Slavery

Slavery was a state of human beings whose present and future lot in life was dependent on the arbitrary will of other persons. A slave was considered merely a commodity and not a human being. He had no will of his own and no rights — not even the basic rights of life and marriage. They were captured in wars, which were not initiated by any noble principle or lofty ideals but were solely directed by a wish to enslave other people and exploit them for self-aggrandisement. These wars were waged in order to enable the Roman people indulge in licentious luxuries and live in prosperity, enjoy cold and hot baths, costly costumes, delicious and tasty food of every kind, and revel in sensual pleasures — drinking bouts, whoredom, dancing as well as public gatherings and festivals. In order to provide for these enjoyments they subjected other nations and exploited them most mercilessly. Egypt which was freed from the Roman overlordship by Islam was treated no less cruelly. It constituted a granary of wheat for the Roman Empire.¹

Savage pastime of the Romans

To satisfy this greedy lust of the Roman imperialists the slaves toiled for them in the fields. As mentioned above, they enjoyed no rights. When working in the fields they were fettered in heavy manacles so as to prevent their running away. They were never fed properly but given provisions just sufficient to keep them alive and fit to do their work, and this too not because they thought it was their right to be provided for with sustenance as even the beast and trees are. During the work they were whipped just for the savage pleasure of it which was much relished by their sadist lord or his agent. At the end of the day large groups of them — from ten to fifty men in a group and still fettered in their manacles — were herded together to sleep in dark, foul-smelling cells infested with mice and insects. They were denied even the comfort of wide and spacious folds such as are enjoyed by cattle in their enclosures.²

But the worst and most revolting feature of the Roman attitude towards these slaves was represented by what formed their best loved diversions,

which by the way, also brings into light the innate, barbarous and inhuman character of the Roman civilization.... The slaves carrying swords and lances were led out into arenas with their masters and occasionally the emperor himself seated around exalted seats in order to watch them fight, in dead earnest for their diversion. The slaves fell upon one another recklessly hacking themselves to pieces. The climax was reached when someone of the fighters killed a fellow-slave and threw him cold lifeless on the ground. At this he was lustily applauded with loud hurrahs, vigorous hand clapping and joyous hearty laughter.³

The slave was no better off than this in Persia, India and other countries. Despite all their minor differences the fate of the slave remained the same among all these nations ; his life had no worth, his murder no retaliation, he was burdened with cumbersome obligations carrying with them little or no rights in return. The systems prevalent in these countries differed neither in intent nor in content with regard to slaves: they differed merely in degree or intensity of their cruelty and hideousness which they betrayed in their attitude towards slaves.⁴

Slavery in the earliest human record

The earliest record of man contains no mentions of slavery. No slave went into the ark of Noah and other seven

who composed his family.⁵ It seems to be represented in the book of Genesis as the punishment for the sin of Ham whose son Canaan was to be a "Servant of Servants, to his brethren."⁶ However, first mention of actual slaves is connected with Egypt. It is recorded in the Bible that men-servants and maid-servants were given to Abram by the Egyptians on surrendering his wife to Pharaoh.⁷ The twenty-fifth chapter of Leviticus contains full permit to own slaves with some interesting rules as to their cost and treatment: A Jewish slave could be redeemed but a non-Jew became "an inheritance for your children for ever."⁸ In the twenty-seventh chapter there is a scale of prices that are to be paid for slaves.

Slavery in the New Testament

In the New Testament there is no condemnation of slavery. "Jesus accepted it as a settled institution, although there were many of the pagan writers who condemned the practice. There had been slave revolts in Rome. Jesus was never, at anytime, appealed to for help in abolishing slavery. His teaching of non-resistance, and Paul's teaching that slaves were to be obedient to their masters, whether the masters were good or bad, held out no hope for the slaves."⁹

Will Durant in his famous book, "The

Age of Faith" confirms: The Church did not condemn slavery. Orthodox and heretic, Roman and barbarian alike assumed the institution to be natural and indestructible — slavery continued throughout the Middle Ages."¹⁰

Renan records that the great school of jurisprudence arising from the Antonines is entirely possessed by the idea "that slavery is an abuse that must be suppressed. Christianity never said that slavery is an abuse. The idea never came to Christian doctors. No word occurs in all the ancient Christian literature to preach revolt to the slaves. Never is the master Christian who has Christian slaves compelled to free them."¹¹

Professor Westermarck, in his "Origin and Development of Moral Ideas" says: "The Chief improvement in the condition of the slaves in Rome took place at, so early a period that Christianity could have no share in it. Christianity recognized slavery from the beginning. In the early ages martyrs possessed slaves, and so did abbots, bishops, popes, monasteries and churches."¹²

The main undertaking of the church was to save souls. Slavery of the body and mind was not its concern. Dean Millman says: "The abrogation of slavery was not contemplated by the church even as a remote possibility."

The Rev. T. C. Hall in his elaborate "History of Christian Ethics" says: "The Church, as such, never contemplated doing away with slavery even though Stoicism had denounced it." H. C. Lea, whose histories of Christianity have never been seriously questioned by anyone, says: "That when monasteries acquired slaves 'the dread anathema, involving eternal perdition, was pronounced against anyone daring to interfere with the gift'. Over and over again one comes across orders from the church that monasteries must not sell their slaves, without express permission, and also that it was 'part of their duty to pursue and recapture fugitive bondsmen.' There were also many decrees of church councils forbidding monasteries and abbeys selling their slaves or liberating them without special permission. The church held slaves upto the end. In his days Voltaire calculated that the church in France owned about, 50,000 slaves".¹³

Slavery in England

In England, at first, the slave trade was in the hands of licenced traders. Later it was thrown open to all. Although, the early history of slavery in Britain is obscure as everything else in primitive development, but it seems clear that slavery existed not only from Celtic but also from pre-Celtic times.¹⁴

In 1839, further war was declared with Spain to uphold England's right to a share of slave-traffic. Forty-six thousand slaves were sold to the British plantations every year. More than half the trade in slaves was done by this country. In 1795 one fourth of the ships that sailed from Liverpool were engaged in the slave trade. In 1809 one hundred and five Liverpool owned ships left Africa with a slave-carrying capacity of nearly 50000. The net gains were enormous — over sixty per cent. Thirty to forty per cent was the usual profit.¹⁵ The Domesday Book shows 25,000 slaves in England.¹⁶

The slaves were branded, usually on their buttock with a hot iron. Liverpool papers advertised them for sale, individually, as one advertises prize-dogs, and the description of slit noses and cropped ears etc.¹⁷

They were often made to wear round their necks iron collars armed with prongs.... frequently flogged had red paper rubbed into their lacerated flesh.... their ears were often cut off, their eyes knocked out, their bones broken, their flesh branded with hot iron.¹⁸

There is not a word in the Bible, either Old Testament or even New Testament which speaks abundantly of slaves—to the possibility of liberating a slave much less of abolishing slavery. If one

consults Hobhouse's "Morals in Evolution," one will read that when Christianity came to Europe, the situation of slaves worsened compared to what it was under Roman law ; that Christian slaves used to take refuge in Muslim countries to escape oppressions of their Christian masters etc.... It was not philanthropy, much less Christianity, but material reasons that pushed thereto : the machine proved cheaper than slave labour".¹⁹ When the message of Islam was given to the world by Muhammad (may the peace and blessings of Allah be on him), the Last Prophet of Allah, slavery was an integral part of the social system. It could not be abolished all of a sudden as this institution had become inextricably interwoven into the whole texture of the human society. Islam abolished it gradually. None before Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) had come to the rescue of the unfortunate class. Even that gentle soul, the great Nazarene, who was full of love and affection for his fellow-men, is not recorded to have said a single word in favour of slaves. Perhaps the period of his ministry was too short, or that we do not possess the full record of his teachings, but it would appear that the question of ameliorating the condition of the slave, as well as of woman, did not seem to concern Jesus.²⁰

Islam proclaimed to the masters regarding their slaves :

"You are (sprung) the one from the other".²¹

"He who kills his slave, we shall kill him ; who mutilates his nose, we shall cut his nose ; who gelds our slave, we shall get him gelded in return."²²

"You are all sons of Adam and Adam was created from dust."²³

"There is no superiority for an Arab, nor for a blackman over a red one, nor for a red over a black man save due to piety."²⁴

Islam commanded the masters to deal fairly with their slaves, so much so that the Holy Prophet (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) is on record to have said : "None of you should say : This is my slave and this is my slave-girl : he should rather say : this is my man and this my maiden."²⁵

It was on the authority of such injunctions that Abu Hurairah, on seeing a man riding a horse with his slave walking by said to the man : "Get him seated on the horse behind you, for surely he is your brother, and his soul is similar to yours."²⁶

The slave was no more a "commodity" but a respectful member of the Muslim society, in which a Muslim is considered as a brother of the other Muslim :

"A Muslim is the brother of a Muslim ; he does not wrong him nor does he hand him over to his enemy. He

who occupies himself in relieving the need of a brother will find that Allah occupies Himself in relieving his need. He who removes the trouble of a Muslim will have one of his troubles removed by Allah on the Day of Judgment. He who covers up the fault of a Muslim will have his faults covered up by Allah on the Day of Judgment".²⁷

The Holy Quran says :

"O mankind, surely We have created you from a male and a female, and made you tribes and families that you may know each other. Surely the noblest of you with Allah is the most dutiful of you".²⁸

Gradual abolition of slavery in Islam

Maulana Muhammad Ali in his English commentary of the Quran explains that, "The principle of the brotherhood of man laid down here is on the broadest basis. The address here is to ...men in general, who are told that they are all, as it were, members of one family...Superiority of one over another in this vast brotherhood does not depend on nationality, wealth, or rank but on the careful observance of duty, or moral greatness".²⁹

After raising the then slaves, from the state of abject slavery to noble state of brotherhood with free men, Islam abolished this institution gradually but effectively. The following rules were laid

down for the complete abolition of this inhuman institution :

- (i) Prisoners can only be taken after a regular battle ;
- (ii) they cannot be retained after the war is over ; and
- (iii) they are to be set free as a mark of favour or by way of exchange.

We shall now discuss some of the steps taken to abolish this institution.

1. Islam encouraged the freeing of slaves as an act of charity. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) freed all the slaves he had. The example was closely followed by his companions. The first Caliph of Islam Hazrat Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) spent large amount on purchasing freedom of the slaves from idolatrous chiefs. Besides this the slaves were also bought out of the public Exchequer whenever there was some money to spare for this purpose so as to set them free."³⁰

The Quran exhorted liberation of slaves and provided that the income of the Muslim State should every year partly be allotted for the emancipation of slaves.³¹

2. The slaves were promised freedom if they would teach reading and writing to ten Muslims or render any service to the Muslim community.

3. Islam prescribed freedom of slaves as an atonement for some of the sins.

The Holy Quran says :

"Allah will not call you to account for that which is vain in your oaths but He will call you to account for the making of deliberate oaths ; so, its expiation is the freeing of a neck."³²

Allah indeed has sanctioned for you the expiation of your oaths.³³ The expiation referred to "is only allowed in the case of oaths by which a man deprives himself of some lawful things.³⁴ This contributed considerably to the liberty of numerous slaves.

3. Freedom of the slaves was prescribed for killing a believer as is recorded in the Holy Quran :

"And he who kills a believer by mistake should free a believing slave."³⁵

4. The policy of the Holy Prophet reached a climax when, as is said, he decreed that the Arabs could not be enslaved. The Caliph Umar issued orders that peasants, artisans and professionals of belligerent countries should not be enslaved.³⁶

5. The Holy Prophet had the emancipation of slaves so much at heart that he declared that if the slaves of the enemy deserted their masters and embraced Islam and came to the Islamic territory they would at once become free. Several cases of the time of the Prophet are recorded as precedents".³⁷

6. Islam laid down that no 'person may be taken, or for any time retained, in captivity. Unless he was taken prisoner in a regular war.³⁸ The Holy Quran says :

"It does not behove a Prophet to keep captives unless he has battled strenuously on earth."³⁹

The acquisition of a slave by 'peaceful' means and the keeping of a slave thus acquired is entirely prohibited : which, to all practical purposes, amounts to a prohibition of slavery as a 'social institution'. But even with regard to captives taken in war, the Holy Quran ordains in (47 : 4) that they should be freed after the war is over."⁴⁰ The Holy Quran encourages freedom of the captives :

"So when you meet in battle those who disbelieve smite the necks ; then when you have overcome them make (them) prisoners, and afterwards (set them free) as a favour or for ransom."⁴¹

This passage mentions the only case in which prisoners of war can be taken and thus condemns the practice of slavery according to which men could be seized anywhere and sold into slavery. Here we are told that prisoners of war can only be taken after meeting an enemy in regular battle and even in that case they must be set free, either as a favour

or after taking ransom. It was the former of these alternatives that the Holy Prophet adopted in most cases.⁴² For example the captives taken by the Muslims at Badr were released with a hope that "such act of mercy might induce, some of them to realise the truth of Islam".⁴³

Similar is the case of the prisoners of the Bani Mustaliq, in which a hundred families were set at liberty, and in case of Hawazin, in which six thousand prisoners of war were released merely as an act of favour.⁴⁴ The treatment of the prisoners of war has remained unparalleled. The prisoners were distributed among the various Muslim families because no arrangements for their maintenance by the State existed at the time, but they were treated honourably. A prisoner of war states, "that he was kept in a family whose people gave him bread while they themselves had to live on dates."⁴⁵

7. The unfortunate slaves who may fail to gain their freedom by any of the above means were not left behind. The Holy Quran came to their rescue. It commanded the masters :

"And if any of your slaves ask for a deed in writing (to enable them to earn their freedom for a certain sum), Give them such a deed. If ye know any good in them, yea, give

them something yourselves out of the means which God has given to you.”⁴⁶

Commenting on this verse Allama Yusuf Ali acknowledges that the Law of slavery in the legal sense of the term is now obsolete.”⁴⁷ He further explains : “A slave male or female, could ask for conditional manumission by a written deed fixing the amount required for manumission and allowing the slave meanwhile to earn money by lawful means and perhaps marry and bring up a family. Such a deed was not to be refused if the request was genuine and the slave had character. Not only that but the master is directed to help with money out of his resources in order to enable the slave to earn his or her own liberty.”⁴⁸ The stipulation that such a deed of manumission may not be refused, and the establishment of precise juridical directives to this end clearly indicate that Islamic law has from its very beginning aimed at an abolition of slavery as an institution, and that its prohibition in modern times constitutes no more than a final implementation of that aim. Islam, through this process, paved the way to freedom, and “not passively waited for their masters’ good-will or piety to set them at liberty at their own convenience.”⁴⁹

Islam not only abolished slavery in a systematic way but also exalted the status

of the freed slaves — at times even above their former masters. After *Hijrat* the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) established brotherhood between some Arab chiefs and the freed slaves. He joined Bilal son of Rasah and Khalid son of Ruwaihata al-Khasami ; Zaid and Hamza (the Prophet’s uncle) ; Kharija son of Zaid and Abu Bakr etc. By marrying Zainab Prophet’s cousin) to Zaid, (Prophet’s freed slave) an example was set to show that a slave could attain to the highest level of a Qureishite chief from out of the abyss of ignominy into which he was hurled by his cruel fellow human beings.⁵⁰

Is concubinage allowed in Islam ?

Muhammad Asad while commenting on verse 3 of Surah *Al Nisa* (4 : 3) Says : “It is obvious that the phrase “two, or three, or four : but if you have reason to fear.....” etc., is a parenthetical cause relating to both the free women mentioned in the first part of the sentence and to female slaves — for both these are governed by the imperative verb “marry”. Thus, the whole sentence has this meaning : “Marry from among (other) women such as are lawful to you, or (from among) those whom you rightfully possess — (even) two, or three or four : but if you have reason to fear that you might not be able to treat,

them with equal fairness, then (only) one" — implying that, irrespective of whether they are free women or, originally, slaves, the number of wives must not exceed four.

It was in this sense that Muhammad Abduh understood the above verse (see *Manar* iv, 350). This view is, moreover, supported by verse 25 of this surah (Al-Nisa) as well as by 24 : 32 where marriage with female slaves is spoken of contrary to the popular view and the practice of many Muslims in the past centuries, neither the Quran nor the life-example of the Prophet provides any sanction for sexual intercourse without marriage.⁵²

There is no Quranic injunction which allows sexual relations with a female prisoner of war or a slave girl without a formal marriage. There are clear and unambiguous instructions in the Holy Quran that female prisoners of war should not remain unmarried (2 : 221 ; 4 : 3 ; 4 : 25, 24 : 33). The reader is referred to recent works on this subject for a detailed study.⁵³

1. Muhammad Kutub, *Islam the Misunderstood Religion*, (The Holy Quran Publishing House, Damascus, Syria 1977) p. 27.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 28.

5. Bible Genesis, 7 : 1-9.

6. *Ibid.*, 9 : 25.

7. *Ibid.*, 12 : 16.

8. Bible Leviticus, 27 : 3-8.

9 Chapman Cohen, *Christianity and Slavery*, (The Pioneer Press, G.W. Foote and Co. Ltd., London), p. 2.

10. Will Durrant, *The Age of Faith*, p. 21 (quoted by Dr. Muhammad Fazlur-Rahman Ansari in his : *The Quranic Foundations and Structure of Muslim Society*, vol. I, (Indus Educational Foundation, Karachi,) p. 247.

11. Earnest Renan, quoted by Chapman Cohen, *Supra*, p. 6.

12. Chapman Cohen, *Supra*, p. 7.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

14. James Hastings, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, (Edinburgh, 1920), p. 607.

15. Chapman Cohen, *supra*, p. 10.

16. James Hastings : *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, (Edinburgh, 1920) p. 607.

17. Chapman Cohen, *Supra*, p. 10.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

19. Dr. Muhammad Hamidullah quoted from a personal letter to the writer of this article.

20. Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, *The Message of Islam*, (The Mosque, Woking, England, 1926) p. 33.

21. The Quran : Al-Nisa, 4 : 25 (Mau-

lana Muhammad Ali's English Translation)

22. Hadith narrated both by Bukhari and Muslim besides Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi and Nasai quoted by Muhammad Kutub, Supra, p. 28.

23. Hadith narrated both by Muslim and Abu Dawud quoted by Muhammad Kutub, Supra, p. 29.

24. Hadith narrated by Bukhari quoted by Muhammad Kutub, Supra, p. 29.

25. Hadith by Abu Hurairah quoted by Muhammad Kutub, Supra, p. 29.

26. *Ibid*

27. Muhammad Zafarullah Khan, *Gardens of Righteous*, (Curzon Press, London, 1975) Hadith No. 235 (Bukhari and Muslim) p. 59, see also Ahadith numbered 236-37.

28. The Quran : Al-Hujurat, 49 : 13 (Maulana Muhammad Ali's English Translation).

29. *Ibid.*, footnote No. 2331, p. 979.

30. Muhammad Kutub, Supra, p. 32.

31. The Quran, 9 : 60.

32. The Quran, Al-Maidah, 5 : 89.

33. The Quran, Al-Tahrim, 66 : 2, (see also 90 : 13 ; 58 : 3).

34. Maulana Muhammad Ali, English Translation of the Quran, p. 267, note 730.

35. The Quran, Al-Nisa, 4 : 92.

36. Muhammad Hamidullah, *Muslim Conduct of State*, (Sheikh Muhammad Ashraf, Lahore 1977) p. 217.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 276.

38. Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Quran*, Dar al-Andalus, Gibraltar, 1980) footnote to verse 8 : 67.

39. *Ibid.*, 8 : 67.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 251.

41. Maulana Muhammad Ali, English Translation of the Quran, 47 : 4.

42. *Ibid.*, Note 2294, p. 961.

43. Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Quran*, p. 251 footnote to verse 8 : 68,

44. Muhammad Ali, English Translation of the Quran, note 2294.

45. Muhammad Ali, *The Religion of Islam*, Lahore 1971, p. 484 (reference to the prisoners taken from *Tarikh al-Umami Wal-Muluk* by Abu Jafar Muhammad Ibn Jarir Tabari.

46. Allama Yusuf Ali, English Translation of the Quran, Al-Nur, 24 : 33.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 906, note 2991.

48. *Ibid.*, note 2991.

49. Muhammad Asad, Supra, p. 540, note 46.

50. Muhammad Kutub, Supra, p. 33.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

52. Muhammad Asad, Supra, p. 101, note 4 on verse 4 : 3.

53. The readers are requested to study (i) N.A. Faruqi's article : "Slavery and Concubinage" published in *The Light*, Lahore of November 8, 1979 and (ii) Hafiz Muhammad Sarwar Qureshi's detailed book called "Namusi Rasul" published by Jama'at-i-Islami, Kohat, Pakistan ; can also be obtained from the author at 50 Topfield Parade, London N8.

THUS SPOKE THE HOLY PROPHET
(Peace and blessings of God be upon him)

Anas said, the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "None of you has faith unless I am dearer to him than his father and his son and all mankind."

(Bukhari, 2 : 7).

Anas said, the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, said: "Whoever offers prayers as we do and turns his face to our Qiblah and eats the animal slaughtered by us, he is a Muslim for whom is the covenant of Allah and the covenant of the Messenger of Allah; so do not violate Allah's covenant." (Bukhari, 8 : 28)

The New World Order

by Maulana Muhammad Ali

"The author well-known in the East and West as an erudite thinker, prolific writer and an ardent missionary of Islam, makes a thorough analysis of the complicated problems of the world, arising out of the materialistic philosophy and civilisation of the West and boldly prescribes for the ills of the suffering humanity. The author examines in the light of the Qur'anic injunctions, the various solutions offered by Islam to the numerous problems of the modern world". — *The Dawn*, Karachi.

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DARUL KUTUB ISLAMIA

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There is not a word in the Bible, either Old Testament or even New Testament which speaks abundantly of slaves—to the possibility of liberating a slave much less of abolishing slavery. If one consults Hobhouse's "Morals in Evolution," one will read that when Christianity came to Europe, the situation of slaves worsened compared to what it was under Roman law; that Christian slaves used to take refuge in Muslim countries to escape oppressions of their Christian masters etc.... It was not philanthropy, much less Christianity, but material reasons that pushed thereto: the machine proved cheaper than slave labour". When the message of Islam was given to the world by Muhammad (may the peace and blessings of Allah be on him), the Last Prophet of Allah, slavery was an integral part of the social system. It could not be abolished all of a sudden as this institution had become inextricably interwoven into the whole texture of the human society. Islam abolished it gradually. None before Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) had come to the rescue of the unfortunate class. Even that gentle soul, the great Nazarene, who was full of love and affection for his fellow-men, is not recorded to have said a single word in favour of slaves. Perhaps the period of his ministry was too short, or that we do not possess the full record of his teach-

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WE BELIEVE

(1) After the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) Allah has completely barred the appearance of a prophet, old or new.

(2) After the Holy Prophet, Gabriel can never descend and bring Prophetic Revelation (*Wahy Nubuwwah*) to any person.

(3) If Gabriel were to descend with one word of Prophetic Revelation (*Wahy Nubuwwah*) on any person, it would contradict the two complementary verses :

“This day have I perfected your Religion for you” (5:5); “He is the Messenger of Allah and the Last of the prophets.”

(4) The Holy Prophet also said : “I am Muhammad and I am Ahmad and I am *al-Aqib* (the one who comes last) after whom there can be no prophet”. (Al-Bukhari : Kitab al-Manaqib).

(5) In the light of the above Islamic fundamentals, the Holy Founder of the Ahmadiyya Movement never claimed to be a *Nabi*, but the God-Ordained Mujaddid (“The Promised Messiah”) of the 14th Islamic Century, having been expressly raised to re-establish the predominance of Islam in the world.

(6) He named his followers ‘Ahmadi’ after the Holy Prophet’s *Jamali* (beatific) name ‘Ahmad’.

(7) He proclaimed that no verse of the Holy Qur’an has been abrogated, nor shall ever be abrogated.

(8) All the Companions of the Holy Prophet and the Imams are venerable.

(9) It is spiritually conducive to our Faith to accept the revivalist Islamic missions of all *Mujaddids* (Renovators).

(10) Any one who declares his faith in the *Kalimah* (Muslim formula of faith — *la ilaha ilallahu Muhammadur Rasulullah* — is a Muslim.

Islamic and Christian Conceptions of God

by KHWAJA KAMAL-UD-DIN

"The conception of Godhood in Islam which is that of Power, cannot come up to the Christian conception, where God is Love." The idea is but a re-echo of what is repeatedly heard from Christian platforms whenever any attempt is made to compare Christianity with Islam. The subject is not without interest, and may be approached from various angles — theological, philosophical and logical. The most important among these is the historical aspect. The Christian idea has a certain sentimental beauty ; but logical difficulties in the way of its acceptance immediately arise, especially when viewed from the practical side of life, and in the light of actual events.

Historical aspect

I should like to deal with the historical aspect of the case as a natural sequel to what I have already said. The Dean, in common with other writers on the subject, admits a fallacy into his argument. Such writers start with the assumption of facts which need proof. They beg the question ; with all possible academical gowns on their shoulders they commit the common error of *petitio principii*. The new Epiphany whereof the Church boasts depends

entirely on the occurrence of the following facts. God was born of a Virgin so that He might be crucified on Calvary in order to save humanity from perdition by thus paying the penalty for their sins with His own life. He did it willingly, out of His love for humanity. I will deal later on with the reasonableness of such an assumption. But the first question to be considered is this : Did ever such an event occur in history ? I have already shown that the story owes its origin to pagan imagination and was incorporated with Christianity by the Early Fathers of the Church. Jesus, as pictured by the Evangelical record, is a personality quite distinct from that portrayed in the literature passing under the name of St. Paul. We find nothing in the former picture to substantiate this uncommon conception of Divine Love. Jesus never spoke of it in his lifetime. Nay, he preached precisely the opposite.

He made righteous dealing and obedience to the Law the only passport to heaven. (St. Matt. xix: 16-22). If he had, indeed come to save humanity by his blood—thus obviating the necessity for good deeds, as Luther argues — he would have

proclaimed that Gospel himself to the world. Throughout the course of his ministry he seems to know nothing of this Redemption, though the Synoptic record speaks of his being tried for sedition by a Roman judge who was induced by the Jews to sentence him to crucifixion. Though almost all features of the trial story are derived from the passion story of Baal—one of the virgin-born sun-gods—yet it establishes only one fact: that a righteous person was wrongly tried for sedition and hanged for it. Such events are not of infrequent occurrence. Many innocent people are wrongly tried for sedition and put to death. Do they all atone for someone's sins? If not, how does the case of Jesus vary from that of other innocents who were victims of persecution? Jesus said nothing about his coming to bear our sins, or about his trial and persecution taking place as a manifestation of Divine Love. His behaviour in the Garden before his arrest shows that he had heard of what was coming. He tried to evade it, and with that end in view withdrew into the Garden to conceal himself. He told his disciples to keep watch and thus help him against his enemies. Many a time he fell on the ground and prayed God to save him from the impending fate. How, in the light of these events, can we conclude that God willingly came in His Own Person to

suffer death, so that He might give expression to His peculiar Love for humanity? We read, of course, in the Bible that when celebrating the last Passover Jesus said that the bread and wine of the feast were his body and blood for the New Dispensation. But it should not be forgotten that the Gospel writings are not genuine and cannot be relied on *in toto*. It has also been established that these scriptures were written in the second century, or afterwards when the Church of Jesus was in the pagan melting-pot. We also know that the Feast of the Passover was not established by Moses at the Divine Command, but was merely a thing of pagan origin, celebrated by the heathen to commemorate the sun's crossing of the equator, which ushers in Easter (or Spring, which it literally means) and gives new life to the earth. It is also clear that all that is reported as having been done at the Last Supper was only a repetition of the pagan Eucharistic Feast. It is a blasphemy to think of Jesus observing a pagan festival. I admit that such a festival had already made its way into his tribe, but even then the words used by Jesus do not suggest that he was going to be slain for the salvation of mankind. He was Eastern. He spoke in an Eastern language, a language which is full of similes. He knew, from the

history of the prophets, that all reformers and teachers of a new dispensation suffered physical persecution. They had established the truth that the tree of Reformation has always needed human blood for its sustenance and that martyrdom furthers the cause of a true religion. As a Prophet of God, Jesus foresaw all that was likely to happen to him, seeing that, in his case, the atmosphere around him was full of trouble. He knew that his own tribe had been heartless enough to put many a prophet to death before him. If such events have often been reported in sacred history there was nothing peculiar in the remark that Jesus made on the occasion of the Passover Feast if he observed it at all. The most surprising thing of all is the fact that, when he came out of the tomb, he did not refer to his death as a penalty for other's sins. We read very little of what occurred after the supposed Resurrection. St. Matthew was doubtful about the event, and the only description of it which we find in the Bible is given in the last ten lines of St. Mark. But these are admittedly a forgery, being neither in the Vulgate nor in the original Greek text, as pointed out in a marginal note by the first English-translators of the Bible. But accepting them as they are, even they do not hint that the death of the Master was by way of atonement for the sins of mankind. Is it not a surprising thing that the very per-

sonage who achieved this work of redemption and was the instrument for bringing this new revelation of Divine Love upon the earth remains absolutely silent on the subject? We read of the Redemption theory in the Pauline literature. But the story is there told by a writer who could not quote Jesus in support of his assertion. He bases his argument on the theory of the Fall of Adam. But the Fall was not referred to by Jesus himself, nor do we find any allusion to it in any Jewish scripture; it was invented to fit the Redemption stories of the heathen gods with which the pagan literature is teeming. The Christian passion story has recently been discovered to be the same passion story as that enacted in a popular mystic drama. There are two Babylonian tablets, says the *Quest*, appertaining to documents discovered by the German excavators in 1903-1904, at Kala Shar Gate, the site of the ancient Ashur. They belonged to a library at Ashur, which was founded in the ninth century B.C. The tablets disclosed astounding facts. The two stories, the story of Jesus and story of Baal, are one and the same. It therefore, not only deprives the Evangelical record of any claim to be genuine, but also represents them as a complete plagiarism. If the facts, which are necessary to establish this peculiar revelation of God's

Love, are decidedly of heathen origin, with very little in the Bible to support them, and if the Biblical record is admittedly folk-lore then the Dean St. John and his fraternity are talking of a thing which never happened in history. They, as I said before, start to theorize on an assumption of facts that lack proof.

Psychological aspect

Now I will look at the case psychologically. To make a virtue of necessity is a common thing, but to create a new logic to serve some necessity, and thus to make a departure from the established order of things in metaphysics, is only to abuse the laws of learning. Love and Power, for instance, should not be regarded as antithetical, the one to the other, as the Church has always tried to represent them when comparing Islam with Christianity. A Muslim theologian is not so ignorant as to commit this fallacy, especially when Love is only a substantive and principal quality, while Power is auxiliary in all its functions. If it be the function of Power to serve the ends of Love, how can they be opposed to each other? The love of justice induces us to defend the helpless and innocent against tyranny. The love of helping others incites us to generosity. The love of truth prompts us to expose a liar, a proceeding which often requires moral courage. All these manifestations of Love and its several other

forms necessitate the possession of power by him who indulges in this noble passion. If we cannot understand the manifestation of Divine Love which is supposed to have occurred at Calvary, it is not only because it seems to indicate want of Power on the part of God, but also because it is inconsistent with our notions of Godhood. It is derogatory to Divine dignity, especially when we believe that God could fulfil His object—the deliverance of the wicked race—in some honourable way. But the Dean is of opinion that God's action of Calvary manifests His power of suffering and of sacrifice. No doubt it is a noble example of sacrifice to give one's life to save that of others; but sacrifice, in itself, comes into play when its maker has been left no other alternative. If he has more dignified means at his command for the working out of his design, and yet prefers to meet a despicable fate instead of having recourse to them, it would show a niggardly spirit rather than one of sacrifice. Sacrifice, in the last resort, means exhaustion, and the absence of any other means to save the situation. It is unbecoming and even blasphemous to think of such poverty of resource in the case of God. If He could save sinful humanity and regenerate them by other means, why should He stoop to such undignified methods, especially when the whole plan itself is

to raise a very important question : 'The foregoing sections may have sometimes seemed to raise a doubt whether any credible elements were to be found in the Gospels at all.' The answer to this question is that in all the Gospels, the following five passages may be treated as surely credible : (1) The passage that shows that Jesus refused to be called sinless : 'Why callest thou me good ? there is none good but one, that is, God' (Mark x. 18). (2) The passage that shows that he held that blasphemy against himself could be forgiven : 'All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men : but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men' (Mark xii. 31) (3) The passage that shows that his own mother and brethren had no faith in him and they sincerely thought that he was mad : And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him ; for they said, He is beside himself' (Mark iii. 21). From v. 31 it appears that these friends were his own mother and his brothers. (4) The passage that shows that Jesus Christ had no knowledge of the unseen : 'Of that day and of that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the son but the Father.' (5) The passage that speaks of the cry of despair that he uttered on the cross : 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me' (Matt. xxvii, 44). To these five are add-

ed four others dealing with his miracles which will be referred to in the discussion on his miracles later on, and these nine passages are said to be 'the foundation-pillar for a truly scientific life of Jesus.'

It would thus be seen that the basis of the Christian religion is laid on the most unreliable record, and the stories of the miracles wrought and the wonderful deeds done, on which is based the doctrine of the Divinity of Jesus Christ and of his superiority to all mortals, can therefore be only received with the greatest caution. It must, however, be borne in mind that mere superiority of Jesus Christ as a mortal to another mortal, says the Holy Founder of Islam, does not bring us a whit nearer the truth of the Christian religion unless it is shown that he possessed a Divine nature or that he did deeds which no mortal has ever done. If the Christian religion had followed the principles laid down by the earlier prophets, the assertion that Jesus Christ was a greater man than any other human being that ever lived, would have done some good to the cause of Christianity, but so long as the atonement of the sins of men by a Divine person remains the central doctrine of that religion, nothing less than a clear proof that his superiority to other mortals lay in being Divine and above a mortal can be of any use to its cause. It is in this light that a discussion of the relative merits of Christianity and Islam, or of the relative greatness of their founders, can really help a seeker after truth.

Going to fail in bringing true moral regeneration to mankind? It is interesting to note here that I do not find sacrifice in the list of the Qur'anic names of God. It is, no doubt, a morality of the highest order, and the basis of various other high qualities, such as bravery, generosity, charity, and the like; but meritorious as it is in the case of man, it is not so in the case of God. If a man, who has, say, a thousand pounds spends a hundred shillings in charity, it will not mean any great degree of sacrifice on his part. But it would be the highest sacrifice if a man who had ten pounds gave it all away in charity. The idea of parting with some thing one's very own is a necessary constituent of the idea of sacrifice. If God gives us anything. He loses nothing. Sacrifice means loss. Therefore, it is improper to suppose that God Himself should possess the quality of sacrifice, though to create an example for others He may raise up some godly man for that purpose. Herein lies the difference between patience and sacrifice — a difference which is often overlooked by Church theologians. Divine government may suffer a breach of its laws, but the Moral Ruler loses nothing by it, so it is not His sacrifice but rather a species of device (if the word be permitted) for the furtherance of the Divine Plan. The sinner is not punished at the

moment of his sin because he may yet repent, and for this reason God is most rightly be invested with the attribute of Patience, but not of Sacrifice, and so do we find it in the Qur'an.

A queer logic

To render the position tenable, the Church must needs resort to a queer sort of logic. It is argued that the grace of the Lord, which includes also the forgiveness of sin, cannot be granted without some compensation, and that a sinner cannot be forgiven until the penalty for his sins has been paid, which is also necessary if justice is to be done. This Church logic discloses a number of fallacies. It involves the assumption of the proposition that God cannot show His grace without a price being paid therefor. On the other hand, if He could do so there would be no necessity for any atonement, and the whole theory of atonement would fall to the ground. Church theology is purely dogmatic, and entirely unsupported by natural theology. All Nature gives the lie to it. Millions of things necessary for our life here on earth, as well as in the hereafter, were given to us without our deserving them. They were not given by way of compensation for any action of ours, seeing that they came into being millions of years before man was created. All things in heaven and earth are a necessity; we cannot live for a minute

if one single component part (however slight) of the universe is eliminated, and all these existed before man's appearance on the scene. Thus, the Grace of God, was manifested without any demand for compensation from us. To allow an evil race to enjoy a life of bliss would be another instance of the Grace of God. If He, with all His knowledge of our coming misdeeds, had been gracious enough to give us the means of happiness without exacting therefor any price in this life, nothing could prevent Him from doing the same thing when we die. Why then assume a compromising position for our Lord, if the situation could have been saved without bringing Him to the indignity which He is supposed to have suffered at Calvary?

The Church, in this connection, would refer to the Divine sense of justice. The clergy would argue that the ends of justice demand punishment. But as the Love of God wanted to save humanity, justice became reconciled with His Love when He suffered His own death on the Cross. This, the half-Apostolic logic of Pauline literature, only betrays ignorance on the part of the clergy of the theory of criminal liability. A sense of justice must be respected in the judge when he has to decide between the rights of two parties — the wrong-doer and the sufferer. The judge must punish the culprit if he is to satisfy the demands of justice. But there

is no occasion for this when the dispute lies between an offender and the judge himself. If the judge forgives an offender for his wrong to another person, without the consent of that person, it is sheer injustice. But if he forgives the sinner for a wrong against himself, it is no violation of justice but an act of true mercy. This is what is meant in the Lord's Prayer when Jesus said, "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (St. Matt. vi. 12). Here he said nothing in any way unintelligible, but simply referred to common practice. If we forgive our debtors, we do so by remitting the debt. We never go through the farce of paying them something out of our own pocket and then asking them to return it to us by way of payment. Where is the necessity for such a novel method of "give and take" when by simply saying that we remit the debt we absolve the debtors from all liability. It may, perhaps, seem presumptuous on the part of Jesus to enlighten the Lord in this respect. Yet it is not so. The prayer seems to me to be a revealed one and the author of it — the Most High — inserted the sentence in order to warn the Church that was to come against belief in the theory that the Lord would not show His Mercy without price. The whole Church theory in this respect falls to the ground, since it is undoubtedly curious that Christian people should ask God, night and morning, to remit their sins

without penalty, and yet entertain beliefs flatly contradicting the spirit of the prayer.

There is yet another thing to be considered. Belief in salvation by the Blood of Christ might be accepted as the specific means for regeneration, were it able to kill the disease of sin. Had our participation in the Eucharist transmuted the base metal in us, making us morally regenerated after eating the body and drinking the blood of the Lord, we should certainly have believed in it. But a church-goer leaves the precincts of the church with the same sinful nature with which he entered it and partook of the Holy Meal. The Lord's Supper has indeed actually increased sin instead of acting as a charm against it.

To return to the psychological aspect of the case, I would say again that Power and Love are in no sense antagonistic. Love, in itself, has its merits and demerits, and we cannot speak of it in a detached sense when speaking of God or use the term in its popular sense. Love, in its worse aspects, begets whoredom, fornication, and illegitimacy. The love of money is responsible for numberless crimes: Theft, cheating, misappropriation, forgery, are different manifestations of the evil wrought by an inordinate love of money. Avarice, cupidity, niggardliness come under the same

category. Nevertheless, Love has also its beautiful phases—beneficence, benevolence, compassion, mercy, sympathy, fellow-feeling, devotion to the children—which come into existence when Love gets fair play within legitimate and desirable limits. How then can we speak lightly of Love and even of Power as Divine Attributes when they change in their quality according to circumstances? They no doubt, are the strongest bulwarks of theology. When appearing in their highest form they belong to God. But before we say "God is Love," we must be quite clear about the nature of the Love which we believe pertains to God. The Holy Qur'an, therefore, does not give us any derivative of the word "hubb" (the Arabic equivalent of the English word "love") when speaking of the Divine Attributes, though the sacred list gives many names which include Love in its best and highest aspects. They refer to all that constitutes Love in its most desirable sense, ignoring all conceptions and phases of Love which tend to encourage inordinacy and evil, or are incompatible with Divine grandeur.

Before I deal with this part of the subject, it is necessary to establish a *criterion* whereby to test Love in its worthiest forms, for it is indeed a poor sort of logic that would attempt to prove its case by relying on statements or assump-

tions which our opponents do not admit as facts. It would be the fallacy of *petitio principii* over again. For example, to remove the slur cast by the story of the crucifixion on Divine Majesty, the Church at once speaks of a Divine Love which had to be revealed. But when the Church is asked for proof of the so-called Divine Love they refer us to the crucifixion of Jesus, and where can we find a worse example of the vicious circle? How can we accept the crucifixion of Jesus in proof of it, without believing in his divinity? It should be proved in itself, as every proposition should be, by independent evidence; otherwise we get back to our vicious circle again.

It is a matter for rejoicing that science has given us a most reliable method whereby to test the truth of the various theological concepts. God has come now within the scope of scientific research. His existence has been established; but this happy event has also shaken the foundations of all religions and theologies that did not derive their source from the Most High. Scientific observation has found its own theology, which may be named Natural Theology. We find Intellect, Design, Propriety, Precision, and Precaution in the working of Nature. We find that the Maker of Nature possesses Compassion, Liberality, Benevolence, Beneficence, Purity, and Justice. He appears as the Maker of laws, yet is

Himself observant of His own Laws. He is jealous of His Laws and sometimes inexorable in punishing those who transgress them, but forgiveness and the remission of offence are also His Prerogative. There is no mediation with Him, His blessings are open to every living person. Lip-service is of no avail with Him, but they are amply rewarded who translate their belief into action. The Creator of Nature is our best Exemplar, and if we follow His ways we become successful in every walk of life. He is Bountiful, but there seems to be no sacrifice in this on His part, since He does not appear to be in the need of it. These and numberless other truths have been writ large on every page of Nature, which has been rightly styled, in the Qur'an, the Open Book of God. If we had been able to study and master it, as the Holy Qur'an urges us to do, there would have been no necessity for any revelation from on High. But history shows that man cannot interpret Nature's Book without Divine Revelation. The Book of Nature is, therefore, the most reliable criterion wherewith to test the respective claims of the various beliefs. These are not the days of miracles, and if there had been any Worker of Miracles, His work would have been set at naught by science, just as most of the miracles mentioned in ancient scriptures have been proved to be either folk-lore or performed through

the knowledge of some secret of Nature unknown to the world at large at the time. The only means whereby a religion can prove its truth is the testimony that it may receive from Nature in its support, be it Judaism, Christianity, Islam, or any other creed. It cannot command any allegiance from intellectually advanced people if its verities are not confirmed by Nature. If this part of my treatise is agreeable to the Dean, he will at once discover why it is that a Muslim does not see his way to accept the Church tenets. There are many points of agreement between Christianity and Islam, but wherever there is a difference, Nature stands on the side of Islam. The Christian Catechism, therefore, needs amendment. It should try to establish the Church verities in the light of Nature, and then to approach Muslims; otherwise foreign Missions will continue, as hitherto, to meet with failure in Muslim countries. Similarly, let us refer the matter in dispute to the judgment of Natural Theology and see if there is even a title of evidence in the whole of Nature which exhibits the peculiar aspect of Love alleged to have responsible for Calvary.

Love of God

We may be mistaken in our reading of Nature, but we candidly admit that we find no proof whatever of the Church's theory of the working of God. The Muslim mind has been trained by the Qur'an

to form its own unbiased opinion. The Holy Book appeals to Nature repeatedly in support of its tenets, and has established this principle for the thinking mind, that it must first perceive similarity between the work and the Word of God before accepting the latter, if it lays down any unintelligible doctrine. On these grounds of reasoning, we are unable to entertain the Church conception of Divine Love. To us, it is quite untenable. But we should be prepared to accept it if the Dean could discover any manifestation of Nature, whereby it might be corroborated. This leads me to yet another aspect of the subject. Let us see how the Love of God, in general has been revealed. We find the following features to be noted in His Work. The Creator of Nature is also the Nourisher and Maintainer. Everything in creation finds means to satisfy its needs. He is not partial in this respect. So far, His Love may be compared with that of a father, but we find something else which is beyond the power of a father to show or even possess. God of His special Love for His creatures, reposes wonderful and high capabilities in everything, then He brings it to perfection, arranging for its sustenance in every stage of its development. In modern scientific phraseology, He works on the principle of evolution, and for brevity's sake I would call Him the evolver of everything in Nature.

Firm Faith in Allah

PROF. MIRZA HABIB-UR-RAHMAN, M.A.

Confidence in God

Confidence in one's powers and faculties is an optimistic sign of life in man. Firm faith in God is the habit of those in whose heart the Supreme Lord of heavens and earth dwells. These pious people believe that all operations, all performances are monitored from on High. So they apply the greatest care, energy, force and fidelity to the performance of social, intellectual and humanitarian duties, in anticipation of God's goodwill and blessings. Fear and love of God like shadows perpetually brood in their minds. Since they believe that all actions and their results are activated by Divine Will, so man's foremost duty is always to please God, with the best of motives. Hence excess of confidence in all their efforts and exertions, is reposed in Him Who created them to work in obedience to His will and approbation. Their sole aim is to subject their actions, thoughts, intentions, motives and impulses by the will God. They persistently and sincerely believe in his Unity, Omnipotence, Omniscience and Omnipresence. Such men are the most pious saints dearly cherished by God. All their prayers, their wishes and ambitions are always

blessed by Him. They scrupulously avoid anything which is likely to displease Allah. If, in their unguarded moments they err, they lie prostrate before the Lord and indulge in humble supplications and entreaties to forgive them. Even a mere slip of tongue is a matter of concern for them and they devotedly pray for the rectification of such errors. They, therefore, never cease seeking forgiveness of Allah in every moment of their lives.

Failures bring home ultimate power of God

Generally men with great mental and physical strength are confident of their powers. By virtue of their superior faculties they believe that man, by his heroic efforts, sound planning and right judgment, can solve successfully the most difficult problems of life. Their determination, combined with zest and vitality, tend to create in them an over-confidence that all the achievements have come to them by their own effort and wisdom without any outside help. But at times they completely fail in spite of their well-thought out designs. When afflicted by calamities or faced with failures, they come to realize that there is

surely a mightier Power, a greater Genius that controls the operations of man and the universe they live in.

An atheist is completely under the sway of the devil

An atheist, whose mind is overshadowed by the fascination of the world, while the devil accelerates his activities, cannot probe into the secret workings and mighty power of God. In high spirits, he goes and sees all that is curious in the world. The sparks of love, beauty, pleasure and delusive charms keep him in a cheerful mood for a time only. But soon his mental peace, contentment and mirth are brushed away. His deliberate denial of God distorts his vision, befouls his imagination, corrupts his judgment and mortifies his will. He is morally a dead-alive man, whose arguments breathes a poisonous atmosphere. He is a play-thing of the devil, who opens before him a vista of sensual desires, animal passions, and pleasures and luxuries of life.

Complete faith in God

Can there be a more inspiring instance of complete faith in Allah than the leaving of Hazrat Hajira and her new-born child in the dreary and desolate rocks of Mecca by Prophet Abraham? The annals of history cannot furnish a parallel example of greater sacrifice than Abraham's readiness to immolate his beloved son Ismail, as an offering and homage to

God. It was a supreme act for the sake of winning God's goodwill. Again it was Joseph's complete faith in Allah that gave him strength, when he was thrown into a deserted well by his brothers. Joseph, therefore, refrained from indulging in lamentations or dismay. His transparent morality and chastity were put to a severe trial, when he refused the amorous advance of Aziz's wife Zulaikha. There were many stages in the immaculately pure life of our Holy Prophet Muhammad (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) when, by virtue of his complete faith in God, exhibited super-human qualities of a well-intentioned and pious hero. The infidels of Mecca offered him beauty and wealth, if the Holy Prophet would desist from propagating the message of Allah, but he refused point-blank all those offerings. He was ridiculed, was pelted with stones, was threatened to be killed, was disgraced and attacked, but he bore all the infamy and misfortunes with an unflinching faith in his great mission. "Don't feel aggrieved, God is with us", was the essence, the key-note of his life mission, the fly-wheel of his spiritual mechanism, which revitalized his followers to imitate his moral qualities. From brutes his followers were exalted to the highest pitch of glory and spiritual excellence. It is one of the greatest miracle in human history when

a whole nation was imbued with virtue, rectitude and piety who were polluted by years of impurities, sensualities, debaucheries and tyrannies. All this marvellous change was due to the Holy Prophet's spiritually elevated dynamic personality, his nocturnal prayers and his complete faith in the Creator of the heavens and earth.

Toward Spiritual attainment

We people, whose life-long activities are limited to mere wordly pursuits, should try to achieve spiritual excellences. Acquisition of wealth, ranks, dignities and show of lewd dalliances have kept us far away from God and His mercies. Our faith in Allah is cloaked under a vain show of loyalty. We say that our prayers are not granted, we complain that our best endeavours come to naught—the reason is not far to seek. We have discarded God. Our hearts belie Supreme Being's illimitable powers and boundless bounties He bestows upon his creatures.

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BIRTH OF JESUS — II

(from p. 6)

itself the notion of a man being called Son of God already had a long tradition behind it". (p. 174)

"But, in our terms, the title seems to have been metaphorical and honorific." ... "However, this physical meaning of divine sonship is contradicted in the account of Jesus' baptism, at which one of the ancient adoption formulae used at the coronation of the King, 'Thou art my son' (Ps. 2.7) is spoken from the sky.... "And as Christian theology grew through the centuries it made the very significant transition from 'Son of God' to 'God the Son', the Second Person of the Trinity" (p. 175).

"Thus it was natural and intelligible both that Jesus, through whom men had found a decisive encounter with God and a new and better life, should come to be hailed as son of God, and that later *this poetry should have hardened into prose and escalated from a metaphorical Son of God to a metaphysical God the Son, of the same substance as the Father within the triune Godhead*". (p. 176)

"It is clearly literally meaningful to say that Jesus *was a man, part of the genetic stream of human life; finite in intelligence, information and energy; and conditioned by a particular cultural and geographical milieu*" (p. 177).

"The further influence of Jesus, then,

as we may hopefully foresee it, will be not inside and outside the church. Within, the traditional liturgical language will no doubt continue to be used, Jesus being spoken of as the Son of God, God the Son, the Logos incarnate, the God-Man. But there will be a growing awareness of the *mythological character of this language*, as the hyperbole of the heart, most naturally at home in hymns and anthems and oratorios and other artistic expressions of the poetry of devotion. Christianity will — we may hope—*outgrow its theological fundamentalism, its literal interpretation of the idea of incarnation*, as it has largely outgrown its biblical fundamentalism.

"As the stories (for example) of the six day creation of the world and the fall of Adam and Eve after their temptation by the serpent in the Garden of Eden are now seen as profound religious myths, illuminating our human situation, so the story of the *Son of God* coming down from heaven and being born as a human baby will be seen as a mythological expression of the immense significance of our encounter with one in whose presence we have found ourselves to be at the same time in the presence of God". (pp. 183-184)

From the above copious quotations the following four points are clear :

(1) The Church-dogmas have been con-

tinuously growing throughout the ages. What Jesus said and taught was not what the present Orthodox Christian-dogmas are. Sometimes after Jesus his teachings were changed to give them a literal meaning which he himself did not mean. This was done to suit the then prevailing religious mythology.

(2) During the present context of advanced knowledge of science and truth a re-orientation of his teachings is needed. It is in essence this that the terms used in the Gospels such as Son of God, God Incarnate, God the Father, have been employed in their symbolical sense and not literally. Jesus as presented by history was a man in flesh and blood and not God, who had been sent for a specific purpose to effect reform.

(3) If such a needed reform of Orthodox Christianity is not accepted by the ecclesiastics and the laity, it is feared that they may be totally abandoned, because of their contradictions with truth and science. If Christianity needs to vie with other world religions such as that of Buddhism and Islam, the necessity for such a change is obvious.

(4) There is need for a universal faith to-day for the unity of mankind.

In all honesty and truth we have tried to summarise what the book purports to mean. The very title of the book "The Myth of God Incarnate" indicates

clearly what according to the learned authors Christian-Dogmas, should signify in the light of science.

In the light of what we have said before, it is not surprising why the Rev. Bishop of Lahore has made no mention of Jesus as 'God' or 'Son of God', but has taken his stand only on the virgin birth, 'spirit and word of God' or his other miracles mentioned in the Quran. In all seriousness, one may ask the worthy Bishop that if today the essential church doctrines have proved to be symbolical expressions and not literal as previously held by Christians. It is all the more probable that future research would prove the remaining Christian conceptions as relics of old mythology. The only way to reach the original teachings of Jesus Christ is to take symbolical expressions in a metaphorical sense as pointed out by the verses of the Holy Quran quoted above. Jesus is well-known for his talking in parables which are related in the Gospels, and which his first disciples even could not understand and had to ask their master as to their actual meanings.

The revelation to the Last of the Prophets, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) came to clear the confusion and interpolations made into the original teachings of Jesus Christ.

The Christian error is that they ascribe to Jesus a position above Adam or other Prophets whereas the Holy Quran regards him as a prophet like other prophets. The Muslims believe Jesus to be one of the elects of God and like them to be sinless but no more. Even Muslims who believe in the virgin birth and other miracles of Jesus, do not assign to him a status more than a mortal Prophet.

The Holy Quran declares the fundamental principle of faith to be the doctrine of Unity of Godhead, making no exception and condemning every kind of partnership (*shirk*) with God in the most emphatic manner. It would suffice here to quote only two verses from the numerous Quranic verses condemning the Christian doctrines of Trinity and Divinity of Jesus :

“O people of the Book, exceed not the limits in your religion nor speak anything about Allah, but the truth. The Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, is only a messenger of Allah and His Word which He communicated to Mary and a mercy from Him. So, believe in Allah and His messengers. And say not, Three. Desist, it is better for you. Allah is only one God. Far be it from His glory to have a-son” (4 : 171).

“They say : The Beneficent has taken to Himself, a son. Certainly you make an abominable assertion. The

heavens may almost be rent thereat and the earth cleave asunder and the mountains fall down in pieces, that they ascribe a son to the Beneficent”. (19 : 88-91) —A. B.

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A Muslim Examines the Fundamental Doctrines of Christianity

The unreliability of the Gospels

by M. Y. 'ABDULLAH

Christianity as practised today has little connection with Jesus Christ

Christianity as practised today in cloisters and churches has little connection with its venerable founder who never claimed divinity either for himself or for his mother.

What is passing as Christianity today is an unhappy conglomeration of various systems and cults welded together into an incoherent whole by the fathers of the Holy Roman Catholic Church, in order to compete with the Greek, the Roman, the Syrian and the Egyptian priests who were catering for the public taste by offering religions suited to the preconceived notions of prospective adherents and followers.

The zealous Church fathers, in order to carry away the palm, drew, not only copiously but also indiscriminately from all the prevalent religious systems which so far as their individual nature was concerned, were more or less eclectic. This infiltration of dogmas and rituals from foreign and alien sources into the simple religion of Jesus continued for six long centuries, till by dint of Church

councils held under the aegis of the Popes — who were regarded as infallible — all these heterogeneous elements, viz. Trinity, Incarnation, Logos, Original Sin, Son of God, Mariolatry, Atonement and Crucifixion — were most solemnly stamped as Christianity.

The movement known as the Reformation in European history did not aim at reforming the original religion preached by Jesus; Luther and his associates did not trace the evil to its source: what they did was to reform the Christian Church and not the Christian religion. Luther did not reject the un-Christian doctrines of the Trinity, or the Incarnation or the Atonement; on the other hand, he rejected the Church doctrines of the infallibility of the Pope, the Transubstantiation, the Confession, the Inquisition and the Asceticism practised by the clergy. The vestiges of Mithraism, Essenism, Manicheism, Buddhism and Neo-Platonism persist, and are visible even today in the simple religion of Jesus.

Modern Christianity is, in a very large measure, responsible for the degradation of religion itself in the eyes of the enlightened peoples of the globe, and the wave of scepticism and materialism which eventually swept the whole of Europe in the 18th century, resulting in the modern God-less civilization, which, in its turn, is solely responsible for the mighty cataclysm which has engulfed Europe in the present age.

Christianity without any genuine revealed scripture

Christians affirm that their religion is based upon the New Testament, and that Christianity is a revealed religion. But a close scrutiny into this statement reveals that claim to revelation is unfounded.

A revealed religion, in order to establish its claim, must produce a book revealed by God to the founder of that religion, but Jesus, as admitted by Christians themselves, gave no book to his followers. He descended into the Hades and then ascended to the heavens without leaving any book behind him. What is known as the New Testament today is a collection of four incomplete narratives of his earthly sojourn by four individuals, two of whom, St. Mark and St. Luke, were not his disciples, the Acts of the Apostles, some Epistles, the majority of them by St. Paul, who had not seen the master, and the Revelation of St. John.

The question remains : Where is the book compiled by the founder of the religion ? Alas ! Christianity is a religion without a revealed book. To the plea that the four gospels were revealed to the synoptists and St. John by God, I would say :

“St. Luke does not himself lay any claim to revelation : on the contrary he begins by admitting that he has compiled the biography of Jesus from hearsay, vide St. Luke 1 : 1-3 : “For as much as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us. Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses, and ministers of the word, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first to write unto Thee in order, most excellent Theophilus.”

This preface by St. Luke proves that Jesus left no book behind him and so his followers took upon themselves the task of “Setting forth a declaration of things most surely believed among them”.

Why did God reveal His word to those four writers, and why did He not adopt the more reasonable course of revealing His word to the founder himself ? But the difficulty does not end here. Even the books written by the followers of Jesus are lost to us for good ; hence no reliance can be placed upon the “Authorized

Version" in English, and their multilingual translations in other languages.

The Revised Version is an improvement upon the Authorized Version, and this is the translation of certain Greek *MSS.*, viz., Codex Vaticanus, Codex Alexandrinus, Codex Ephraemi and Codex Bezae, supposed to have been scribed during the 5th and 6th centuries after Jesus.

(a) Taking it for granted that the original *MS.* was in Greek, the question arises, how to account for the text and its existing copies mentioned above? How can it be proved that Codex Vaticanus is the faithful copy of the original text?

(b) Where is the original text written during the life-time of the original or genuine writers or compilers of the New Testament?

(c) Is there any evidence available that these Greek *MSS.* are genuine and authentic reproductions of the original?

(d) Is there any proof that the original or genuine gospels, were written in Greek; and this depends upon reproducing the original text?

(e) Unless it is proved that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John wrote in Greek, we are quite justified in presuming that they wrote in Hebrew or Syriac or Aramaic.

(f) Jesus was a Jew, he was born in a Jewish family; he preached to the Jews; his earliest converts were Jews; he spoke

Aramaic — the local dialect, as is evident from his last words on the Cross. "Eli, Eli, lama Sabachthani?". Under these circumstances, the truth of which is established beyond any shadow of doubt, it is well nigh impossible to assert that Jesus and his disciples spoke and wrote in Greek — a language quite foreign to the Jews.

(g) All commentators are agreed that Matthew wrote his gospel in Hebrew, but the text has been lost. Who can prove that these existing Greek *MSS.* are a faithful translation of the original Hebrew Gospel which is now no more to be seen in the world?

Thus modern Christianity is a religion without any revealed book.

(h) According to all the Church historians of repute, there were current in Christendom no less than 133 gospels during the first three centuries after Christ. It may be asked: Who selected these four out of that enormous number of gospels which were current in the Christian world, and what authority had he behind that selection?

Even the so-called original Greek *MSS.* differ from one another in many places, and in the absence of the true record, it is quite impossible now to determine the genuineness of the verses in question. But, in the words of Sir William Muir. "Except the Qur'an, there is no other book under the sun which for the last twelve centuries has remained with so

pure a text" (vide *Life of Mahomet*, Introduction, by Sir William Muir, London, 1858). As to the founder of Christianity, what we can gather about him is rather shrouded in mystery.

The divinity of Jesus cannot be a source of inspiration to mortal human beings

He did not leave a book of any description for his followers, and left the matter of religion entirely to their discretion.

He laid no claim to any exalted position for himself, which is greatly ascribed to him by his followers, but told them to follow the same old Mosaic dispensation. He knew nothing about the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Logos, the Transubstantiation, the Antonement, the Mariolatry, or the elaborate rituals of the Roman Church, or the dogma of the infallibility of the Pope.

He is no source of inspiration to men as we are apt to attribute all his achievements to his divinity, and this element is lacking in us.

Again, Jesus left his work unfinished owing to his sudden arrest and crucifixion. He left some portion of his teachings to be imparted by the Paraclete (vide John 14 : 16).

The interpolations in the New Testament

Having given my own views regarding the spurious and unreliable character of Bible, I now adduce the testimonies of eminent and world-famous scholars of

the Bible to support my contention that the Bible, including the New Testament as it exists, is not authentic, hence all the Church doctrines and dogmas based upon it have no sound basis or historical background.

Dr. A. Clarke, D. D., in his famous commentary on the New Testament, published in New York, 1831, has made the following observation regarding various readings in the New Testament :

"Copies of MSS. were formed both by skillful and unskilled hands, and when these copies were compared with the originals, various readings would surely appear. As some of the readings would appear irreconcilable or contradictory, subsequent scribes would either alter or amend the text from conjecture where they could not have access to the original MSS., and this would give rise to another category of various readings.

"There is no doubt that original MSS. differ amongst themselves, for when the Christians dispersed, they carried several MSS. along with them separately. Certainly each group had at least one MS. with it, and in many cases these MSS. differed from the original one, consequently their copies would also differ amongst themselves, and in this way the number of various readings multiplied.

"Dr. Mill counted these various readings and they numbered 30,000. Dr.

Griensbach, who spent more than 30 years in this thankless task, counted more than 300,000 various readings in the *MSS.* of the New Testament alone. Although a number of mistakes have been committed by careless copyists, not one essential truth has been impaired or suppressed."

How a man can believe or be convinced of the authenticity of the text when he stands face to face with as many as 300,000 various readings is beyond my understanding.

"Matthew's Gospel," continues the learned doctor, "is generally allowed to be the most ancient part of the New Testament, and modern critics contend that it was written between 61 and 65 A.D. Others are of the opinion that it was written as early as 41 A.D., and this is supported by the subscriptions at the end of this gospel in most *MSS.*, but they are posterior to the 10th century.

"Dr. Michaelis, the renowned critic and scholar of the Biblical text, has adopted a middle path which carries such probability with it, viz., that Matthew wrote his gospel in Hebrew in 41 A.D. and its translation into Greek was made in 61 A.D. or later.

"Whether the gospel of Matthew was originally written in Hebrew or in Greek is a question which has baffled many a renowned critic. The balance, however is clearly in favour of a Hebrew original. *Who* translated the Matthew's Gospel from Hebrew into Greek and *when* and *where* and by whose authority and under whose guidance? — are ques-

tions to which no answer can be given either by the Church or by the scholars. These questions must for ever remain a mystery."

The views of Dr. D. H. A. W. Meyer on St. Matthew's Gospel

The Rev. D. H. A. W. Meyer, the well-known commentator of the New Testament writes :

"In the form in which the gospel of St. Matthew now exists it could not have originally proceeded from the pen of the Apostle Matthew. Consider :

(a) The existing gospel which is in our hands today contains indefinite statements of time, place and other facts which are certainly irreconcilable with the living recollections of an eye-witness and a participator in the events themselves.

(b) The gospel narratives and statements are obscure and indistinct in many places, and several events are not historically connected as they should have been, coming as they do from an eye-witness.

(c) The gospel contains narratives, whose un-historical character must certainly have been known to the apostle, e.g., Matthew, 27 : 51 : "And the well of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom and the graves were opened and many bodies of the Saints which slept, arose and came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the Holy City and appeared unto many." Thus we see that history

and legend are both mixed up to the detriment of the gospel veracity.

(d) The narrative of the Temptation of Jesus by Satan has been disproportionately enlarged.

(e) The narratives of the Last Supper, the death of Jesus, and the appearance of the risen Saviour stand in need of being corrected by John's Gospel.

(f) Matthew's Gospel, as we have it, seems entirely dependent upon St. Mark.

"Nevertheless," continues Dr. Meyer, "it must be regarded as a fact, placed beyond doubt by the tradition of the Church, that our Matthew is the Greek translation of the original Hebrew, clothed with the Apostolic authority of St. Matthew. In support of my findings, I quote the following Church fathers :

(1) Papias says, 'Matthew wrote the discourses in the Hebrew dialect, and each one interpreted them as he could' *vide Eusebius*, 3 : 39).

(2) Irenaeus says, 'Matthew published a gospel amongst the Hebrews in their own dialect, when Peter and Paul were in Rome' (*vide*, Haer, 3 : 1).

(3) Pantaenus says, 'I found with the people of South Arabia the gospel of Matthew in Hebrew.'

(4) Origen says, 'The first written was that by him who was once a publican, but afterwards an Apostle of Jesus, Matthew, who gave it to Jewish believers composed in Hebrew.'

(5) Eusebius, the famous Church his-

torian, says, 'Matthew, having preached to the Hebrews, when about to go to other people, delivered to them in their own language the gospel according to him'.

(6) St. Cyril (Chatechet 14) says, 'Matthew, the same who wrote the gospel in Hebrew, wrote this'.

(7) Epiphanius (Haer, 30 : 3) says, 'Matthew made his setting of the gospel in Hebrew characters'.

(8) Jerome says, 'Matthew published his gospel in the Hebrew language'.

On the strength of the foregoing testimony, Dr. Meyer believes that Matthew wrote the 'Logia' in Hebrew, of which the Greek Gospel is a translation. The collection of the Hebrew sayings, which was in the hands of the Hebrew Christians, was gradually expanded by the interweaving of history into gospel writing, which after having been translated into Greek manifests itself in the present gospel.

The present gospel of St. Matthew is a translation of a certain Hebrew gospel, which, in its turn, originated from the 'Logia' originally supposed to have been composed by Matthew.

The apostolic kernel, the "Logia", itself perished, but the name of the Apostle led to the later Hebrew Gospel being regarded as the work of Matthew himself. The Hebrew original fell into obscurity and gradually became lost for ever.